

## **A Brief Summary of Some Principal Rules of Golf**

### **[ Match and Stroke Play ]**

Put an identification mark on your ball. If you **can't** identify it as yours, it's **lost** (R27).

If your ball becomes unfit for play, you **may replace** it, **without penalty**, on the hole where it becomes unfit or between holes (R5-3).

Count your clubs. **No more than 14** (R4-4). **May be less than 14**.

**Don't** use an \*artificial device or unusual equipment for gauging or measuring distance or conditions, or to give artificial aid in gripping (R14-3). [ \*Unless the Local Rule stated in App 1, B, 9 is in effect.]

**Don't** ask for advice from anyone **except** your partner or your caddie. **Don't** give advice to anyone **except** your partner (R8-1).

During a hole you **may practice swing** **but NOT play a practice stroke**. \*\*Between holes you **may practice chip** and putt on or near the **putting green** of the hole last played or the tee of the next hole **but NOT from a hazard** (R7-2). [ \*\*Unless the Local Rule stated in App I, C, 6b is in effect.]

Play without delay (R6-7).

### **Order of Play**

On the first tee the honor is determined by the order of the draw or, in the absence of a draw, by lot (R10).

In **match play**, the **ball farther from the hole is played first**. The winner of a hole tees off first on the next hole. If a player plays out of turn anywhere on the course, his **opponent may** **immediately require him to replay the stroke** (R10-1).

In **stroke play**, the ball farthest from the hole is played first. The **competitor** with the lowest score on a hole tees off first on the

next hole. There is generally **no penalty** for playing out of turn (R10-2).

In four-ball competitions, partners **may** play in the order they consider best (R30-3c and R31-5).

### **Teeing Ground**

Tee off within two club-lengths behind the front edges of the tee-markers.

If you tee off outside this area, in **match play** there is **no penalty** *but* your **opponent may** **immediately** require you to **replay the stroke**. In **stroke play** you incur a **two-stroke penalty** and **MUST** then **play from within the proper area** (R11-4).

### **Playing the Ball**

Play the ball as it lies (R13-1). *and.....***Don't intentionally touch the ball unless a Rule permits** (R18-2).

Play the course as you find it. **Don't improve** your lie, the area of your intended swing or your line of play or a reasonable extension of that line beyond the hole by moving, bending or breaking anything fixed or growing *except* in fairly taking your stance or making your swing. **Don't press anything down** (R13-2). **Don't build a stance** (R13-3).

If your ball is in a **bunker** or a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard**, **don't touch the ground in the bunker** or the ground or water in the **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard** *before the downswing* (R13-4).

Strike at the ball with the club head. **Don't push** or **scrape** it (R14-1). If your club strikes the ball more than once in a single stroke, count the stroke and add a penalty stroke (R14-4).

If you play a **wrong ball**, in **match play** you **lose the hole**. In **stroke play** you incur a **two-stroke penalty** **and** **MUST** then play the **correct ball** (R15).

### **Putting Green**

**Don't touch the line of your putt** *unless* a **Rule** permits (R16-la). You may **repair ball marks** **and** **old hole plugs** on the line *but not spike marks* (R16-lc).

You may **lift**, **and** if desired **clean**, your ball **on** the **putting green**. **Always** replace it on the exact spot (R16-lb).

**Don't test the surface by scraping it** **or** **rolling a ball** (R16-ld).

If your **ball played from** the **putting green** **strikes** the **flagstick**, in **match play** you **lose the hole** **or** in **stroke play** you incur a **two-stroke penalty** (R17-3).

**Always** hole out *unless* in **match play** your **opponent** concedes your putt (R2-4, R3-2, R16-2).

### **Ball At Rest Moved**

**If your ball is moved** by you, your partner **or** your caddie **except** as **permitted** by the **Rules** **or** **if it moves after you have** addressed it, **add a penalty stroke** **and** **replace your ball** (R18-2).

**If your ball is moved by someone else** **or** **another ball**, **replace it** **without penalty** to you (R18).

### **Ball In Motion Deflected or Stopped**

**If your ball in motion is deflected** **or** **stopped** by you, your partner, **or** your caddie, in **match play** you **lose the hole**. In **stroke play** you incur a **one-stroke penalty** **and** the **ball is played as it lies** (R19-2). [ **Breach of R19 is** **two-strokes** ]

If your ball in motion is deflected or stopped by someone else, play your ball as it lies, without penalty, except (a) in match play, if an opponent or his caddie deflects your ball, you may play it as it lies or replay it or (b) in stroke play, if your ball is deflected after a stroke on the putting green, you must replay. (R19)

If your ball in motion is deflected or stopped by another ball in play and at rest, play your ball as it lies. In match play, you incur **no penalty**. In stroke play, you incur a **two-stroke penalty** if your ball and the other ball were on the green before your stroke (R19-5).

### Lifting, Dropping and Placing

If a ball to be lifted is to be replaced its position must be marked (R20-1).

When dropping, stand erect, hold the ball at shoulder height and arm's length and drop it. A ball to be dropped in a hazard **must be dropped, and** stay, in the hazard (R20-2a).

If a dropped ball strikes the player or his partner, caddie or equipment, it **must be re-dropped without penalty** (R20-2a).

A **dropped ball must be re-dropped** if it rolls into a hazard, out of a hazard, onto a putting green, out of bounds or to a position where there is interference by the condition from which relief is taken (in case of immovable obstructions, abnormal ground conditions, embedded ball and wrong putting green) or comes to rest more than two club-lengths from where it first struck a part of the course or nearer the hole than its original position or other reference point under (R25-1c or R26-1). If the ball when re-dropped rolls into any position listed above, place it where it first struck a part of the course when re-dropped. (R20-2c).

If the original lie of a ball to be replaced has been altered, place it in the nearest similar lie within one club-length not nearer the

hole, **except** in a **bunker** recreate the original lie and place it in that lie (R20-3b).

### Interference

You **may** lift your ball if it might ASSIST any other player (R22-1).

You **may** have any other ball lifted if it might INTERFERE with your play or ASSIST any other player (R22-2).

### Loose impediments

Loose impediments are natural objects (such as stones and leaves) **not** fixed or growing, **not** solidly embedded and **not** adhering to the ball (R23).

You **may** move them *unless* the loose impediment and your ball lie in or touch the same hazard (R23-1).

If you move a loose impediment and your ball moves, the **ball** **MUST** be **replaced** and (*unless* your ball was **on** the **putting green**) you incur a penalty stroke (R18-2c).

### Obstructions

Obstructions are artificial (i.e., man-made) objects. Objects **defining** out of bounds such as fence posts or stakes and immovable artificial objects out of bounds are **NOT obstructions** and are deemed fixed (R24).

Movable obstructions anywhere **may be moved**. If your ball moves, replace it **without penalty** (R24-1).

If an immovable obstruction interferes with your stance or swing, you **may**, **except** when your ball is in a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard**, **DROP** within one club-length of the nearest point of relief **not** nearer the hole. In a bunker, **DROP** in the bunker, and **on** the **putting green**, **PLACE** in the nearest

position which affords relief, not nearer the hole. There is **NO relief** for intervention on your line of play *unless* your ball and the obstruction are **on** the **putting green** (24-2).

If your ball is **lost** in an immovable obstruction (*except* in a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard**) take the same relief based on the point where the ball entered the obstruction (24-2c).

### **Abnormal Ground Conditions**

If your ball is in casual water, ground under repair *or*, *except* in a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard**, a hole, cast *or* runway made by a burrowing animal, you **may drop** **without penalty** within one club-length of the **nearest point of relief** *not* nearer the hole, *except* (a) in a hazard DROP in the nearest position in the hazard which affords **maximum relief** *and* is **NOT** nearer the hole *or*, under penalty of one stroke, DROP any distance behind the hazard *or* (b) **on** the **putting green** PLACE in the nearest position which affords **maximum relief** *and* is **NOT** nearer the hole (R25-1b).

If your ball is **lost** in such condition (*except* in a burrowing animal hole in a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard**), take the same relief based on the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the area (R25-1c).

### **Water Hazards / Lateral Water Hazard**

**Water Hazard** – You **may play the ball as it lies** *or*, under penalty of one stroke, (a) play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (R20-5), *or* (b) DROP any distance behind the **water hazard** keeping the point at which the original ball last crossed the margin of the **water hazard** directly between the hole *and* the spot on which the ball is dropped – (“flag line”) – (R26-1a,b); *or* .....(c) if in a **lateral water hazard**, you **may also**, under penalty of one stroke, (i) DROP within two club-lengths *and* **not** nearer the hole than the point where the ball last crossed the **hazard margin** *or* (ii) a

point on the opposite **hazard margin** equidistant from the hole (R26-1c).

### Lost...or...Out of Bounds

If your ball **may** be **lost** *outside* a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard** (R27-1c) **or** out of bounds (R27-1b), you **may play a provisional ball** (R27-2) **before** you go forward to look for the original, **provided you announce your intention to do so**. If your **original ball** turns out to be in a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard** **or** is found outside a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard**, you **must abandon the provisional ball** (R27-2).

If your ball is **lost** *outside* a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard** (R27-1c) **or** is out of bounds (R27-1b), add **one penalty stroke** **and** play the **provisional** (R27-2) **or**, if you did **not** play a **provisional**, replay the shot (R27-1a)...and... (R20-5).

### Unplayable

If you believe your ball is unplayable *outside* a **water hazard** / **lateral water hazard** you **may add one penalty stroke** **and** (a) **replay the shot** (R28a...**and**...R20-5), **or** (b) **DROP** any distance behind the point where the ball lay (keeping that point directly between the hole **and** the spot on which the ball is dropped – (“flag line”) – (R28b), **or** (c) **DROP** within two club-lengths of where the ball lies **not** nearer the hole (R28c). If your ball is in a **bunker** you **may** proceed under (a), (b) **or** (c), **however**, if you elect to proceed under (b) **or** (c), you **must DROP** in the **bunker** (R28).

### Etiquette

**Don't** move, talk or stand close to **or** directly behind a player making a stroke.

**Don't** play until the group in front is out of the way.

Always play without delay. Leave the **putting green** as soon as all players in your group have holed out.

Replace divots. Smooth out footprints in **bunkers**.

**Don't** step on the line of another's putt.

**Don't** drop clubs **on** a **putting green**.

Replace the flagstick carefully in an upright position.

Leave the course in the condition in which you'd like to find it.

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Knowing and playing by the rules of golf is an important part of the game; and, may be very helpful to your score.

Please refer to the **USGA Rules of Golf** book and/or the **USGA Decisions Book** for a more complete explanation of the **Rules**.

Respectfully

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